

Native Plants that Attract Birds to Your Garden

Regional Parks Botanic Garden – East Bay Regional Park District

This list was compiled by the late Es Anderson, longtime Regional Parks Botanic Garden volunteer and plant sale coordinator. Many of these plants are available at the Garden's plant sales.

Acer macrophyllum—big-leaf maple

Seeds and flowers eaten by Evening Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak, goldfinches, and Pine Siskin;

Deciduous foliage provides good insect foraging for warblers, vireos, bushtits, and kinglets;
Good for shelter and nesting.

Alnus rhombifolia—white alder

Red-breasted Sapsucker drills for sap;

Seeds eaten by Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Mourning Dove, Yellow Warbler, Song Sparrow, and Purple Finch;

Flowers eaten by Cedar Waxwing;

Kinglets, warblers, bushtits, and vireos forage for insects in the foliage.

Aesculus californica—California buckeye

Hummingbirds like the flowers in April.

Aquilegia formosa—western columbine, granny bonnets

Attracts hummingbirds, which serve as primary pollinator.

Arbutus menziesii—madrone

Flowers eaten by Black-headed Grosbeak and Band-tailed Pigeon (May and June);

Fruits eaten by Band-tailed Pigeon, Song Sparrow, flickers, grosbeaks, robins, thrushes, and waxwings in November.

Arctostaphylos spp.—manzanita

Edible fruit attracts many birds, including mockingbirds, robins, and Cedar Waxwing;

Low-growing, shrubby manzanita used by California Valley Quail and wren-tits for nesting.

A. uva-ursi—kinnickinnick

Flowers provide nectar for hummingbirds;

Band-tailed Pigeon eats the flowers.

Artemisia californica—California sagebrush

Good place to look for the Rufous-crowned Sparrow.

A. douglasiana—mugwort

Provides excellent cover in moist places;

Favorite nesting place for Lazuli Bunting and other small birds.

Asarum caudatum—wild ginger

Used by California Valley Quail for nesting.

***Baccharis pilularis*—coyote brush**

Bushtits attracted to the seed and the insects it harbors;
Gold-crowned Sparrow eats the winter-ripe seed.

***Ceanothus* spp.—California lilac**

Quail nest in low-growing shrubby *Ceanothus*;
Seeds attract bushtits, mockingbirds, quail, and finches.

***Cercis occidentalis*—western redbud**

Hummingbirds take the nectar;
Goldfinches eat the seed.

***Cirsium* spp.—thistle**

Goldfinches eat the seed.

***Cornus* spp.—dogwood**

Western Tanager and warblers eat flowers.

C. sericea (creek dogwood) and *C. glabrata* (brown dogwood) are excellent wildlife plants:
Being twiggy and deciduous, they provide good cover and nesting sites as well as foraging
for insectivorous birds;
Their fruits are a favorite of Black-Headed Grosbeak, Plain Titmouse, Band-tailed Pigeon,
Northern Oriole, flickers, robins, thrashers, vireos, woodpeckers, sparrows, and finches.

***Cynoglossum grande*—hound's tongue**

Hummingbirds.

***Delphinium cardinale*—scarlet larkspur**

Very attractive to hummingbirds.

***Dicentra formosa*—bleeding heart**

Hummingbirds.

***Diplacus* spp. (now *Mimulus*)—shrubby monkeyflower**

Flowers attract hummingbirds.

***Fragaria chiloensis*—beach strawberry**

Fruit eaten by Song Sparrow, finches, and towhees.

***Galvezia speciosa*—island bush snapdragon**

Hummingbirds.

***Heteromeles arbutifolia*—toyon**

Fruit attracts Cedar Waxwing, Brown Towhee, Rufous-sided Towhee, Black-headed Grosbeak, Western Bluebird, robins, thrushes, thrashers, and mockingbirds;
Main winter food here for Band-tailed Pigeon, waxwings, quail, and tanagers.

***Heuchera micrantha*—alum-root**

Flowers attract hummingbirds.

***Isomeris arborea*—bladderpod**

Seeds eaten by finches, sparrows, and doves;
Flowers occasionally visited by hummingbirds.

***Juglans hindsii*—California black walnut**

Nuts eaten by Black-headed Grosbeak, towhees, finches, titmice, and thrashers.

***Keckiella cordifolia*—heart-leaf penstemon**

Hummingbirds.

***Lavatera assurgentiflora*—island mallow**

Nectar taken by hummingbirds;
Seeds eaten by goldfinches.

***Layia platyglossa*—tidy-tips**

Attracts seed-eating birds.

***Lilium pardalinum*—leopard lily**

Hummingbirds love lilies.

***Lonicera* spp.—honeysuckle**

Flowers attract hummingbirds.

***L. involucrata*—twinberry**

Hummingbirds love flowers;
Fruit eaten by robins, wren-tits, towhees, thrushes, Western Bluebird, and Chestnut-backed Chickadee.

***Mahonia* (now *Berberis*) spp.—barberry**

Berries eaten by towhees, finches, and robins;
Nectar taken by hummingbirds.

***Mimulus cardinalis*—scarlet monkeyflower**

Hummingbirds.

***Myrica californica*—California wax myrtle**

Berries attract flickers, robins, and finches in late summer.

***Penstemon heterophyllus*—foothill penstemon**

Attracts hummingbirds.

***Pinus radiata*—Monterey pine**

Attracts forest birds like juncos, creepers, and the Chestnut-backed Chickadee.

***Platanus racemosa*—western sycamore**

Attracts finches, waxwings, Pine Siskin;
Down from stems and leaves used by hummingbirds to line nests.

***Prunus ilicifolia*—holly-leaf cherry**

Fruit attracts robins, finches, towhees, Cedar Waxwing, and Black-headed Grosbeak;
Towhees, jays, and mockingbirds love to nest in it.

***Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *lyonii*—Catalina cherry**

Fruit attracts robins, finches, towhees, Cedar Waxwing, and Black-headed Grosbeak.

***Quercus* spp.—oak**

Great bird plants:
They provide many nest sites, including holes, and are full of spiders and insects year-round that are eaten by insectivorous birds—something there all the time for birds with a taste for that sort of thing!
Acorns are the staple food of the Acorn Woodpecker.

***Rhamnus californica*—California coffeeberry**

Black fruit in fall attracts thrushes, jays, mockingbirds, thrashers, quail, robins, waxwings, Band-tailed Pigeon, and Purple Finch.

***Rhus integrifolia*—lemonadeberry**

Fruit attracts thrushes, quail, finches, and flickers.

***Rhus laurina* (now *Malosma laurina*)—laurel sumac**

Attracts thrushes.

***Ribes aureum*—golden currant**

Highly recommended for attracting birds.

***Ribes diversicatum*—blackfruit gooseberry**

Berries attract various birds.

***Ribes sanguineum* var. *glutinosum*—pink-flowering currant**

Flowers attract hummingbirds;
Berries attract thrushes, quail, towhees, robins, and finches.

***Ribes speciosum*—fuchsia-flowering gooseberry**

Flowers attract Anna's, Allen's, and Rufous Hummingbirds;
Berries attract thrushes, quail, and towhees.

***Rosa californica*—California rose**

Hips relished by Pine Siskin, goldfinches, and others;
Excellent nesting cover for quail and other ground-nesting birds.

***Rubus parviflorus*—thimbleberry**

Fruit attracts wren-tits, waxwings, and robins.

***Rubus ursinus*—California blackberry**

Attracts Black-headed Grosbeak.

***Salix* spp.—willow (many species)**

Warblers, thrushes, finches, and Fox Sparrow relish the unripe capsules;
One of the most desirable plants for songbirds and butterflies.

***Salvia* spp.—sage**

S. apiana—white sage, *S. clevelandii*—Cleveland sage, *S. leucophylla*—purple sage, *S. mellifera*—black sage:

All attract hummingbirds, wren-tits, bushtits, and sparrows.

***Sambucus*—elderberry**

***Sambucus mexicana*—blue elderberry**

Fruit ripens in September--“high on bird’s list.”

***Sambucus racemosa*—red elderberry**

Tends to be poisonous to people;

Fruit ripens in June;

Grows mostly in mountains.

Berries of both are eaten by Band-tailed Pigeons, Downy Woodpeckers, doves, finches, towhees, wren-tits, quail, robins, thrushes, mockingbirds, nuthatches, titmice, vireos, waxwings, and flickers;

May provide good cover;

Excellent for nesting;

Among the best plants for attracting birds.

***Sequoia sempervirens*—coast redwood**

Attracts forest birds such as creepers and the Chestnut-backed Chickadee from canyon areas.

***Silene californica*—Indian pink**

Attracts hummingbirds.

***Symphoricarpos* spp.—snowberry**

Anna’s hummingbird visits flowers;

Plant forms thickets that provide cover for nesting sites;

Berries, white and showy in winter when leaves fall, eaten by Evening Grosbeak, Hermit Thrush, Swainson’s Thrush, Rufous-sided Towhee, Warbling Vireo, waxwings, robins, and wren-tits.

***Trichostema lanatum*—wooly blue-curls**

Flowers attract hummingbirds.

***Vaccinium ovatum*—evergreen huckleberry**

Attracts thrushes, including robins.

***Vitis californica* and *V. girdiana*—California wild grape and desert wild grape**

Attract Band-tailed Pigeon, Hermit Thrush, mockingbirds, and waxwings.

***Wyethia* spp.—mules ears**

Attract seed-eating birds.

***Epilobium canum* (was *Zauschneria californica*)—California fuchsia**

A hummingbird favorite.

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A source of water in the garden is a great attraction to birds during the Californian summer. A birdbath or small pond will be regularly visited. Hummingbirds are often seen hovering and drinking in the spray of a hose.